

A NARRATIVE OF THE TRADITIONS, MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MOQUIN INDIANS.

Written from the verbal narrative of Elder Ira Hatch, by James A. Little.

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES.

Their marriage ceremonies are simple and without ostentation. The one witnessed at the Oriba village was conducted as follows: In the morning the interested parties breakfasted in the workshop to which the bridegroom belonged, after which the manufacture of a new pair of blankets was commenced out of the purest white material obtainable. The parties ate their dinner in the second, and then supper in the third, story of the bride's father's house. The pair of blankets were not completed until the second day. During this time the bridegroom and bride were put into a private room, where they were required to bathe each other in pure cold water, as a witness that they were pure and healthy and fit for the cares and responsibilities of the married state. The happy pair occupy the new blankets on the second night.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES.

When a person is given up to die, their under jaw, the backs of their hands and the upper part of the feet are colored black, and friends begin to mourn as though they were already dead. A corpse is prepared for burial by being dressed like the living, with the addition of a blanket wrapped around the head and upper part of the body, and tied around the neck with a string. A hole, several feet deep, is dug in the earth and walled up with stone; in this the dead are placed in a sitting posture. The arms are folded across the breast, and a pole is passed down between the arms and breast and between the legs, long enough to extend about two feet above the surface of the ground. In the bosom of the dead, and wrapped up in the blanket, is a loaf of bread and a small bowl of water—the bowl made especially for this purpose. They believe that the spirit of a good person, after death, first goes to the Sun Father and then returns to the body by going down the pole. The grave is finished by being securely covered with earth and stone, and the surface around the pole neatly ornamented with pebbles.

AMUSEMENTS.

Their public races are an important feature in their amusements. They are for the trial of the speed and bottom of men instead of horses. No betting or anything immoral is connected with them. They are kept up about a month, every alternate day. They take place during the principal season of religious ceremonies, in the winter.

On these occasions, the men are naked except a small blanket about the loins. The bodies of the racers are painted with curious devices, in the colors of the shop to which they individually belong. They also wear a head dress of the same color, and other distinguishing marks, that their progress during the race may be noted by their friends.

The race course is a foot trail, some ten or twelve miles in length. It usually extends in a circuit from the southwest side of the village around to the east side, where the race always ends. They run only two or three miles at first, and increase the distance each succeeding race, until the whole length of the course is run at one heat. The men of each shop have a several sided piece of a hard substance made of cement and finely cut hair. This they are required to throw before them with the foot. The runners rise the bluffs, on which the village is situated, at the end of the race, by steps, and the man who first throws the piece of his shop on top and follows it is the winner of the race. These steps are very small, steep and difficult, being constructed on purpose to try the agility and endurance of the runners at the end of the course.

SELF-SUSTAINING MANUFACTURES, ETC.

The Moquins depend entirely on their own resources for the supply of their wants. They have had but little intercourse with the rest of the world, and that, mostly through a few traders who have occasionally visited them. They expect to produce their food and clothing or do without. Their wheels and looms are of very simple construction, and the process of manufacture slow and tedious compared with the same labors in the households of the whites. They have but few tools of any kind and those are of poor quality.

The Oriba community had eight work shops in which their clothing and all other articles in use among them were manufactured. All the men of the village were organized to work in these shops. Care is taken that members of the same family work in different shops, that the spirit of competition may not divide the community into family parties, but be kept in a healthy channel.

THE BOOMERANG.

A singular coincidence, and one which gives room for some speculation is the fact that the Moquins use a similar instrument of destruction to that used by the natives of Australia, which is called by the whites who live in that country a boomerang. It is made of hard, heavy wood, generally of oak. It is in the form of a right angle, with the angle rounded. The sides vary in length according to the strength of the person who is expected to use it, but they are generally about 15 inches long. They are from two and a half to three inches in width, about an eighth of an inch thick, and worked to an edge. Strongmen will throw these instruments with great precision, 150 or 200 yards and break the skull of a man, or the leg of an antelope. The boys commence practicing with light instruments when very young and kill small game with them while herding sheep and goats.

SCANDINAVIAN STAR.

I AM authorized by Elder James N. Smith to receive Subscriptions for the Scandinavian Star.

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